Supreme Court, U.S.
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No. _____

In The

Supreme Court of the United States

October Term, 1994

LYNN A. SCHEIB, BENJAMIN GROSSE, a minor, by LYNN A. SCHEIB, his next friend and CARL SCHEIB,

Petitioners,

v.

JOAN C. GRANT, BURTON F. GRANT, and DOROTHY B. JOHNSON,

Respondents.

Petition For Writ Of Certiorari To The United States Court of Appeals For The Seventh Circuit

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

Does the Federal Wiretap Act, which prohibits "any person" from "intercept[ing a] . . . wire or oral communication except as otherwise specifically provided" –

1. impliedly include any kind of "domestic relations" exemption, or

2. expressly permit an ex-spouse secretly to tape record calls between his ex-spouse and their minor child and use the contents of the tape against his former spouse in pending state court domestic relations litigation under the "ordinary course of business" telephone extension exemption?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

QUESTIONS PRESENTED i

APPENDIX ..... ii, App. 1

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES iii

OPINIONS BELOW 1

JURISDICTION 2

STATUTE INVOLVED 2

STATEMENT OF THE CASE 6

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT 11

CONCLUSION 24

APPENDIX

Panel Opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, April 15, 1994 ..... App. 1

Memorandum Opinion and Order of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, February 10, 1993 ..... App. 21

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

Page

CASES

Anonymous v. Anonymous, 558 F.2d 677 (2d Cir. 1977) 13, 22, 23

Bess v. Bess, 929 F.2d 1332 (8th Cir. 1991) 13

Campiti v. Walonis, 611 F.2d 387 (1st Cir. 1979) 20

Carey v. Population Services International, 431 U.S. 678 (1977) 23

Connecticut Nat'l Bank v. Germain, ___ U.S. ___, 112 S.Ct. 1146 (1992) 18

Corrugated Paper Products v. Longview Fibre Co., 868 F.2d 908 (7th Cir. 1989) 8

Demarest v. Manspeaker, ___ U.S. ___, 111 S.Ct. 599 (1991) 18

Epps v. St. Mary's Hospital of Athens, Inc., 802 F.2d 412 (11th Cir. 1986) 20

Fultz v. Gilliam, 942 F.2d 396 (6th Cir. 1991) 13

Gelbard v. United States, 408 U.S. 41, 92 S.Ct. 2357 (1972) 11, 12

Harry R. v. Esther R., 134 Misc.2d 404, 510 N.Y.S.2d 792 (1986) 17

Heggy v. Heggy, 944 F.2d 1537 (10th Cir. 1991), *cert. denied*, ___ U.S. ___, 112 S.Ct. 1514 (1992) 13, 15, 21, 22

In re Berk, 70 A.D.2d 943, 417 N.Y.S.2d 785 (1979) 17

In re E.G., 133 Ill.2d 98, 549 N.E.2d 322 (1989) 23

Janecka v. Franklin, 843 F.2d 110 (2nd Cir. 1988) 23

Kempf v. Kempf, 868 F.2d 970 (8th Cir. 1989) 13, 15

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES – Continued

Page

Markowitz v. Northeast Land Co. 906 F.2d 100 (3rd Cir. 1990) 16

Newcomb v. Ingle, 944 F.2d 1534 (10th Cir. 1991) ... 22, 23

Olsen v. Lake County, Inc., 955 F.2d 203 (4th Cir. 1992) 16

Perrine v. Chesapeake & Delaware Canal Co., 50 U.S. (9 How.) 172 (1850) 16

Pica v. Pica, 70 A.D.2d 931, 417 N.Y.S.2d 528 (1979) 17

Planned Parenthood v. Danforth, 428 U.S. 52 (1978) 23

Platt v. Platt, 873 F.2d 1447 (8th Cir. 1989) 13

Pritchard v. Pritchard, 732 F.2d 372 (4th Cir. 1984) .. 13, 15

Rodgers v. Wood, 910 F.2d 444 (7th Cir. 1990) 14

Simpson v. Simpson, 490 F.2d 803 (5th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 419 U.S. 897 (1974) 13, 21

Stockler v. Garratt, 893 F.2d 856 (6th Cir. 1990) 8

Thompson v. Dulaney, 970 F.2d 744 (10th Cir. 1992) 13, 14-15, 22

Thompson v. Dulaney, 838 F.Supp. 1535 (D. Utah, 1993) 14

United States v. Dorfman, 690 F.2d 1230 (7th Cir. 1982) 12

United States v. Harpel, 493 F.2d 346 (10th Cir. 1974) 20

United States v. Jones, 542 F.2d 661 (6th Cir. 1976) .. 13, 15

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES – Continued

Page

United States v. Wuliger, 981 F.2d 1497 (6th Cir. 1992) 14

Watkins v. L.M. Berry Co., 704 F.2d 577 (11th Cir. 1983) 20

Wilmington Trust Co. v. Manufacturer's Life Insurance Co., 624 F.2d 707 (5th Cir. 1980) 8

STATUTES AND REGULATIONS

Federal

Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act 18 U.S.C. §§2510-2521 ..... *passim*

§2510 2-4

§2510(5)(a)(i) 2, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21

§2511 4-5

§2520 ..... 5, 13

Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986, 100 Stat. 1850 (1986) 20

Judicial Code, 28 U.S.C. §1254 2

Illinois

Illinois Eavesdropping Act, 720 ILCS 5/14-1 18

OTHER AUTHORITIES

ALR Annotations

55 ALR Fed. 936 (1981) 22

58 ALR Fed. 594 (1982) 22

25 ALR Fed. 759 (1975) 22

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES – Continued

Page

49 ALR (4th) 430 (1986) 22

Carnegie Corporation Report and other sources as reported in the *New York Times*, April 12, 1994 24

Census Bureau, "Marital Status & Living Arrangements," as reported in the *New York Times*, July 20, 1994 23

Comment, Interspousal Wiretapping: Defining "Marital Home" For Purposes Of Civil Recovery Under Title III, 28 J.Fam.Law 771 (1990) ...21, 24

Comment, Wiretapping & the Modern Marriage: Does Title III Provide a Remedy for Victims of Interspousal Electronic Surveillance, 91 Dick.L.Rev. 855 (1990) 21

114 Cong. Rec. 14694-95 (1968)..... 19

Fishman, C., *Wiretapping and Eavesdropping*, 201 (Cumulative Supp. 1991)..... 22

Guggenheim, M. & A. Sussman, *The Rights of Young People* (ACLU Handbook, Bantam Books, 1985)..... 23

Hearings before the Subcomm. on Crim. Laws and Proc. of the Senate Judiciary Committee re S. 2050, 90th Cong., 1st Session, 1001-002 (1967), dealing with 18 U.S.C. §2510 (8) and (9) (prior authority and extension telephone, respectively), reprinted in *Controlling Crime Through More Effective Law Enforcement*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967 19

Hearings on the Anti-Crime Program Before Subcommittee No. 5 of the House Judiciary Committee, 90th Cong., 1st Session, 989 (1967) 19

NWC Report 24 (1976)..... 13

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES – Continued

Page

Prosser, W. and W. Keeton, *The Law of Torts*, 220 (5th ed., 1984) 19

Sen. Rep. No. 1097, 90th Cong., 1st Session, 11-12 (1967) 19

Webster's New World Dictionary (College Ed. 1968) 16

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v.

JOAN C. GRANT, BURTON F. GRANT, and DOROTHY B. JOHNSON,

Respondents.

Petition For Writ Of Certiorari To The United States Court of Appeals For The Seventh Circuit

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Petitioners pray that a Writ of Certiorari issue to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit entered in this cause on April 15, 1994.

OPINIONS BELOW

The opinion of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit is reported at ___ F.3d ___ (7th Cir.

1994) and is reproduced in the Appendix at pp. App. 1 – App. 20.

The opinion of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois is reported at 814 F.Supp. 736 (N.D. Ill., 1993) and is reproduced in the Appendix at pp. App. 21 – App. 32.

JURISDICTION

The Court of Appeals entered judgment on April 15, 1994. A timely petition for rehearing with suggestion for rehearing *en banc* was filed. After requiring respondents to answer the petition, the court denied it on June 2, 1994. This Court has jurisdiction to review the judgment by writ of certiorari under 28 U.S.C. §1254(1).

STATUTE INVOLVED

Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act
18 U.S.C. §§2510-2521

§2510. Definitions

As used in this chapter –

> (1) "Wire communication" means any aural transfer made in whole or in part through the use of facilities for the transmission of communications by the aid of wire, cable, or other like connection between the point of origin and the point of reception . . . , but such term does not include the radio portion of a cordless telephone communication that is transmitted

between the cordless telephone headset and the base unit;

(2) "oral communication" means any oral communication uttered by a person exhibiting an expectation that such communication is not subject to interception under circumstances justifying such expectation, but such term does not include any electronic communication;

* * *

(4) "intercept" means the aural or other acquisition of the contents of any wire, electronic, or oral communication through the use of any electronic, mechanical, or other device;

(5)(a)(i)(5) "electronic, mechanical, or other device" means any device or apparatus which can be used to intercept a wire, oral or electronic communication other than –

> (a) any telephone or telegraph instrument, equipment or facility, or any component thereof, (i) furnished to the subscriber or user by a provider of wire or electronic communication service in the ordinary course of its business and being used by the subscriber or user in the ordinary course of its business or furnished by such subscriber or user for connection to the facilities of such service and used in the ordinary course of its business;

(6) "person" means any . . . individual . . . ;

* * *

(8) "contents", when used with respect to any wire, oral, or electronic communication,

includes any information concerning the substance, purport, or meaning of that communication;

* * *

(11) "aggrieved person" means a person who was a party to any intercepted wire, oral, or electronic communication or a person against whom the interception was directed;

§2511. Interception and disclosure of wire, oral, or electronic communications prohibited

(1) Except as otherwise specifically provided in this chapter any person who –

* * *

(c) intentionally discloses, or endeavors to disclose, to ~~any other~~ person the contents of any wire, oral, or electronic communication, knowing or having reason to know that the information was obtained through the interception of a wire, oral, or electronic communication in violation of this subsection; or

(d) intentionally uses, or endeavors to use the contents of any wire, oral, or electronic communication, knowing or having reason to know that the information was obtained through the interception of a wire, oral, or electronic communication in violation of this subsection; shall be punished as provided in subsection (4) or shall be subject to suit as provided in subsection (5).

* * *

(2) (d) It shall not be unlawful under this chapter for a person not acting under color of law to

> intercept a wire, oral, or electronic communication where such person is a party to the communication or where one of the parties to the communication has given prior consent to such interception unless such communication is intercepted for the purpose of committing any criminal or tortious act in violation of the Constitution or laws of the United States or of any State.

§2520.

(a) In general. – Except as provided in section 2511(2)(a)(ii), any person whose wire, oral, or electronic communication is intercepted, disclosed, or intentionally used in violation of this chapter may in a civil action recover from the person or entity which engaged in that violation such relief as may be appropriate.

(b) Relief. – In an action under this section, appropriate relief includes –

> (1) such preliminary and other equitable or declaratory relief as may be appropriate;
>
> (2) damages under subsection (c) and punitive damages in appropriate cases; and
>
> (3) a reasonable attorney's fee and other litigation costs reasonably incurred.

(c) Computation of damages. – * * *

(2) In any other action under this section, the court may assess as damages whichever is greater of –

> (A) the sum of the actual damages suffered by the plaintiff and any profits made by the violator as a result of the violation; or

(B) statutory damages of whichever is greater of $100 a day for each day of violation or $10,000.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

This case poses important issues under Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control & Safe Streets Act of 1968 ("Title III" or the "Wiretap Act") that have not been resolved by this Court, but have given rise to substantial conflicts among the courts of appeals:

(1) Does Title III permit an implied domestic relations exemption, and

(2) If not, is it nonetheless in "the ordinary course of . . . business" for an ex-spouse and non-custodial parent to tape calls between his minor child and the other parent and legal custodian, and immediately use the taped information in state court domestic relations litigation pending against the ex-spouse?[1]

These issues arise out of the following facts. Petitioners are: Lynn Scheib ("Lynn"), mother and *custodial* parent of Benjamin Grosse ("Ben"); Ben, a minor who was 11 years old at the time of the wiretapping; and Carl Scheib ("Carl"), Lynn's present husband. They were parties to telephone conversations that were tapped and

[1] Implicit, but not specifically addressed below, is the issue: Does a minor child have a constitutional right of privacy in telephone conversations with his mother/legal custodian or can it be lawfully invaded by the other parent and non-legal custodian?

taped without their knowledge or consent by Lynn's ex-husband and Ben's father, James Grosse ("James").

James and Lynn were married in 1975, had one child, Ben, and were divorced in 1982. Lynn was granted – and always retained – sole custody of Ben. At all relevant times prior to 1991, they all lived in the Chicago area. In early 1991, Lynn told James that she planned to marry Carl, who had been offered a job in Pennsylvania, that they intended to move there, and that new visitation arrangements were needed.[2] She understood that court approval was required to remove Ben from Illinois but sought to reach agreement in advance to avoid undue legal expense.

James retained attorneys, the Respondents Joan and Burton Grant. Instead of attempting to negotiate terms appropriate to the changed circumstances, the Grants immediately sought a preliminary injunction to restrain Lynn from removing Ben from Illinois. Considerable litigation ensued in the Domestic Relations Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County (the "state court"). Lynn filed a petition to remove Ben to Pennsylvania and for substantial past due child support. James resisted and sought to have Ben's custody changed to him. Respondent Dorothy Johnson was appointed guardian *ad litem* ("GAL") to represent Ben's interests. (Johnson and the Grants are the "Respondents.")

After extensive negotiations, a global settlement was reached, and the parties, including the GAL, executed a

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[2] All dates are in 1991 unless otherwise stated.

settlement agreement on June 19, under which Lynn continued to have sole custody of Ben. James was given expanded visitation rights, including 47 days in the summer, beginning on June 19. Relying on the signed agreement, but before its scheduled prove-up on July 2, Lynn moved to Pennsylvania and Ben went to James' home in Illinois for visitation. During that period, Ben, his mother and Carl talked on the telephone.

Without their knowledge or consent, James tapped and taped with his telephone answering machine at least two calls, the last one on July 1. James did not overhear the conversations and learned of their alleged content only by listening to the tapes. He did not record any of Ben's calls other than those with Lynn and Carl.

Respondents claimed in James' affidavit that the tapping was motivated by James' concern that Ben seemed upset after speaking with his mother. In fact, Ben's affidavit shows that he was upset before the phone calls and was not upset by his mother's calls, but rather by certain actions of his step-mother, James' present wife, *prior* to the calls. One of Lynn's attorneys, to whom Joan Grant had played a portion of a tape on July 1, stated in his deposition that Ben's "crying" on the tape was "prompted by unhapp[iness] with his father".[3]

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[3] Petitioners asserted below, and still believe, that summary judgment was precluded by triable issues of material fact, but do not raise that question here. *See, e.g., Stockler v. Garratt*, 893 F.2d 856, 860 (6th Cir. 1990) (if conflicting inferences may be drawn as to purpose of the tap, summary judgment improper). In *Wilmington Trust Co. v. Manufacturer's Life Insurance Co.*, 624 F.2d 707 (5th Cir. 1980), cited with approval in *Corrugated Paper*

On July 1, James took the tapes to the Respondent Grants who knew, or had reason to know, that the tapes were of calls intercepted without the participants' consent. On July 1, the Grants disclosed contents of the tapes to Respondent Johnson and to one of Lynn's attorneys. On July 1, Respondent Joan Grant told Lynn's attorneys that, based on the tapes, they would repudiate the settlement.

Just before the hearing on approval of the settlement agreement on July 2, the Respondents said again that based on the tapes, they would not adhere to the settlement agreement and intended to pursue a change in Ben's custody. Lynn's attorneys then told Respondents that whatever was allegedly on the tapes, since they were made illegally, they were inadmissible.

At the outset of the July 2 hearing, the state court judge said the settlement agreement looked okay, but Respondents said they would not proceed with it.

On August 2, the state court held, on Lynn's motion *in limine*, that as the tapes were made surreptitiously, they were in violation of the Illinois Eavesdropping Act and not admissible in evidence. The state court also held that a minor has a right to privacy and that it was "not in the best interest of", and had a "coercive effect" on, a minor child to allow a parent secretly to record the child's conversations with the other parent.

Products v. Longview Fibre Co., 868 F.2d 908, 914, n.6 (7th Cir. 1989), "prospective impeachment" alone was sufficient to "preclude summary judgment" where, as here, the movant's witness's state of mind was at issue and the movant had the burden of proof.

Realizing on August 2 that they could not use the tapes, Respondents withdrew their objections to the settlement agreement.[4] During a prove-up hearing on August 5, the state court approved the original settlement agreement and Lynn agreed not to sue James for his taping the calls.[5]

After the August 5 prove-up, the Grant Respondents requested a release, releasing all claims against James and his attorneys and agents relating to the wiretapping. Lynn refused and agreed only to what was previously agreed to during the August 5 hearing, a covenant not to sue James. The Respondents also asked the state court to require such a release in the final order, but the court declined. Thus, Respondents knew, or should have known, that claims against them based on their disclosing the alleged contents of the tapes remained unimpaired.

The complaint alleges, *inter alia*, that Respondents were churning the state court litigation in order to enhance their legal and guardian fees;[6] and that Respondents acted with malice. It also alleges that in addition to mental anguish, Petitioners suffered actual damages of at

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[4] On August 2, Respondents obtained leave to file an immediate appeal from the ruling on the tapes, which they never pursued.

[5] During his state court deposition, on advice of his attorneys, the Grants, James invoked the 5th Amendment at least 75 times to avoid answering questions regarding the tapes.

[6] The GAL's fees for the period after execution of the June 19 settlement agreement were quadruple those for the period prior thereto. The Grant Respondents refused to produce documents relating to their fees, and James refused to produce his cancelled checks.

least $30,000 (in attorneys' fees and travel expenses) incurred after the June 19 settlement agreement was signed, all caused by Respondents' efforts to use the tapes to renege on the settlement.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

Presenting a Recurring Issue, the Court of Appeals' Decision is in Conflict with the Decisions of Other Courts of Appeals and the Plain Language of the Wiretap Act

Notwithstanding this Court's view that "Except as expressly authorized in Title III, . . . , all interceptions of wire and oral communications are flatly prohibited" and that "the victim of such interception, disclosure, or use is entitled to recover civil damages," *Gelbard v. United States*, 408 U.S. 41, 47, 92 S.Ct. 2357, 2360 (1972), the Seventh Circuit has denied three victims their right to sue under Title III. It did so by creating an exemption that is not "expressly authorized", is in direct conflict with decisions of other courts of appeals, and is contrary to the plain and unambiguous language of the Act, as well as its purpose. The Court of Appeals has, in short, transgressed Title III's "dual purpose" of "(1) protecting the privacy of wire and oral communications", Congress' "overriding . . . concern", and "(2) delineating on a uniform basis the circumstances and conditions under which the

interception of wire and oral communications may be authorized." *Gelbard, supra,* 92 S.Ct. at 2361.[7]

The decision below holds that an ex-husband and non-custodial parent can wiretap calls between his former wife (as well as her present husband) and the ex-spouses' minor child and use the tapped information in pending domestic relations litigation, when it is merely claimed that the wiretapper believed he was acting in the best interest of the child. (App. 12-13).

By accepting Respondents' concession that Title III "does not contain any sort of 'interspousal immunity' . . . . ", and that "[s]pying on your spouse to gain dirt for a divorce case is never within the ordinary course of a spouse's business", the Court of Appeals plainly – and appropriately – recognized that Title III does not permit domestic relations wiretapping. (App. 9). But it is a non-sequitur for the Court of Appeals to say then, based solely on such concession, that the "question of 'interspousal' exemption is not at issue" here. *Id.* It plainly is an issue here, for what the Court of Appeals gave with one hand, it took away with the other.

It is undisputed that the *same day* James made the second or last tape, he took it to his attorneys, the Respondents, and they, the very same day, used and disclosed it in an effort to renege on a signed settlement agreement in a pending state court action where the ex-

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[7] The Court of Appeals also overlooked its own prior recognition that "Title III implies that what is not permitted is forbidden. . . . " *United States v. Dorfman,* 690 F.2d 1230, 1233 (7th Cir. 1982).

spouses had been battling over child removal, custody, support payments and arrearages.

Thus, this case is factually no different from, but is in direct conflict with, decisions of the 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th Circuits that a domestic relations exemption does not exist and cannot be implied under Title III. *See, Heggy v. Heggy*, 944 F.2d 1537 (10th Cir. 1991), *cert. denied.* ___ U.S. ___, 112 S.Ct. 1514 (1992); *Thompson v. Dulaney*, 970 F.2d 744 (10th Cir. 1992); *Pritchard v. Pritchard*, 732 F.2d 372 (4th Cir. 1984); *United States v. Jones*, 542 F.2d 661 (6th Cir. 1976); *Fultz v. Gilliam*, 942 F.2d 396 (6th Cir. 1991); *Kempf v. Kempf*, 868 F.2d 970 (8th Cir. 1989); *Platt v. Platt*, 873 F.2d 1447 (8th Cir. 1989); and *Bess v. Bess*, 929 F.2d 1332 (8th Cir. 1991). Other decisions are in conflict. *See, Simpson v. Simpson*, 490 F.2d 803 (5th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 419 U.S. 897 (1974), upon which the Seventh Circuit does not rely, and *Anonymous v. Anonymous*, 558 F.2d 677 (2d Cir. 1977), which carved out domestic relations exemptions.[8]

As stated concisely in *Heggy, supra*, 944 F.2d at 1539:

> After reviewing these authorities, and others, the district court below held that Title III, specifically 18 U.S.C. §2520 thereof, does apply to interspousal wiretaps. * * * We agree with the district court, and join the majority of federal circuit courts in holding that Title III does provide a remedy for such wiretapping. We believe this conclusion is compelled first and

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[8] The National Wiretap Commission termed the *Simpson* decision an "unexpected obstacle [. . .] in the path of law enforcement" in the prosecution of domestic relations wiretapping. *NWC Report* 24 (1976).

foremost by the clear and unambiguous language of the statute.

The opinion below seeks to avoid the core of the majority rule, granting its validity, but then asserting that the wiretapping here was expressly permitted under the so-called business-use extension telephone exemption. Thus, to deny Petitioners the protection of Title III, the Court of Appeals had to read the phrase "in the ordinary course of its business" in §2510(5)(a)(i) broadly to "lexical[ly] stretch" it to include the "business" of parenting, at least when the parent claims to act "out of concern for the child's well-being." (App. 11, 12-13). Significantly, too, it determined that committing what it conceded to be a crime and a tort under State law was "ordinary," and held that the lawyers involved were "immune" from the civil consequences of their nonetheless unlawful actions. This result must not be permitted to stand.

The Court of Appeals' decision conflicts directly with *Thompson v. Dulaney*, 970 F.2d 744 (10th Cir. 1992), which held lawyers subject to liability for using, in custody proceedings, tapes of telephone conversations between the plaintiff-husband and his minor children, made by the wife during the pendency of divorce proceedings.[9]

In *Thompson*, a case which is factually indistinguishable from this one (except that here the eavesdropping

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[9] On remand, the defendant lawyers' motion for summary judgment was denied. *Thompson v.Dulaney*, 838 F. Supp. 1535 (D. Utah, 1993). In other domestic and non-domestic relations cases, lawyers have been held liable for using in court illegal tapes made by their clients. *United States v. Wuliger*, 981 F.2d 1497 (6th Cir. 1992); *Rodgers v. Wood*, 910 F.2d 444 (7th Cir. 1990).

occurred nine years after the parties were divorced), the court said (p. 748; some internal citations omitted):

> This statutory language, prohibiting "any person" from intercepting communications, is clear and broad. No language in the statute evidences a congressional intent to except tapping in this factual setting. *See Heggy*, 944 F.2d at 1540; *Kempf*, 868 F.2d at 972-73; *Pritchard*, 732 F.2d at 373; *Jones*, 542 F.2d at 667.
>
> Although resort to the legislative history is unnecessary in light of the unambiguous language of Title III, *see Pritchard*, 732 F.2d at 373, we reiterate *Heggy*'s characterization of that history as "evinc[ing] a congressional awareness of the widespread use of electronic eavesdropping in domestic relations cases and an intent to prohibit such eavesdropping." * * * First, remarks by Senator Long: " 'The three large areas of snooping in this [non-governmental] field are (1) industrial (2) divorce cases, and (3) politics. So far, we have heard no real justification for continuance of snooping in these areas.' " * * * Second, Professor Robert Blakey, "generally credited as the architect of Title III," testifying that: " 'private bugging in this country can be divided into two broad categories, commercial espionage and marital litigation.' * * * ." Finally comments of Senator Hruska, a co-sponsor of the bill: " '[a] broad prohibition is imposed on private use of electronic surveillance, particularly in domestic relations and industrial espionage situations.' * * * "

The Court of Appeals' "broad reading" (App. 11, 12) of §2510(5)(a)(i), apart from being contrary to the general rule of statutory construction that express exemptions to

a remedial statute must be narrowly construed,[10] is plainly erroneous, as well as inconsistent with the majority rule.

First, since spousal wiretapping is expressly barred under Title III and no exemption can be implied – as the court below correctly recognizes – *a fortiori* it ought not be read into an express exemption under §2510(5)(a)(i). "[A]n interpretation of [a] statute which . . . would . . . render different sections inconsistent with each other cannot be the true one." *Perrine v. Chesapeake & Delaware Canal Co.*, 50 U.S. (9 How.) 172, 187 (1850, Taney, C.J.). Yet, that is precisely what the Court of Appeals did.

Second, the plain language of §2510(5)(a)(i) does not support the court's conclusion. "Ordinary", as in "ordinary course of its business", means "customary, usual, regular, normal". *Webster's New World Dictionary* (College Ed. 1968). No credible basis exists to believe that it is customary, usual, regular or normal for one parent secretly to record telephone conversations between a minor child and the other parent, even if the tapper believes that it is in the child's best interests. It is absurd to believe that an 11-year-old child – or any teenager – expects that his or her private telephone conversations with one parent will be monitored "normally or regularly" by the other parent. One need only talk to his or her teenage son or daughter to be disabused of that notion. Obviously, a parent speaking with her child does not believe that the other parent, especially when the

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[10] *Olsen v. Lake County, Inc.*, 955 F.2d 203, 206 (4th Cir. 1992); *Markowitz v. Northeast Land Co.* 906 F.2d 100, 105 (3rd Cir. 1990).

parents have long been divorced, will routinely and secretly monitor such phone calls.

Lynn, Ben's mother and legal custodian, certainly had a right of privacy in telephone conversations with him. Ben's affidavit shows that Lynn called him because she had learned that Ben was distressed by something his stepmother had done. Implicit in the decision below is that a father, ex-spouse and non-legal custodian has a Title III right, by merely asserting his belief that he acts in his child's best interest, to override the Title III right of the mother and legal custodian to speak in private with her child, at a time when she believes her call is in the child's best interest.

The fallacy of the Court of Appeals' interpretation is heightened by the generally accepted view – expressed by the state court here and by numerous others – that it is "coercive" and "contrary to a minor's best interests" for one parent secretly to record private conversations between the minor child and the other parent. *See, e.g., Harry R. v. Esther R.*, 134 Misc.2d 404, 510 N.Y.S.2d 792, 796 (1986); *In re Berk*, 70 A.D.2d 943, 417 N.Y.S.2d 785, 786 (1979); and *Pica v. Pica*, 70 A.D.2d 931, 417 N.Y.S.2d 528, 530 (1979).

When Congress uses the phrase "ordinary course of . . . business", words of art in statutes such as the Internal Revenue Code, it is meant to distinguish between commercial and personal matters. But even if "business" could include "parenting", the modifier "ordinary" begins the phrase. It requires an inference of language antithetical to the sense of the statute to believe that Congress ever contemplated, when it outlawed *all*

eavesdropping in domestic relations cases, that a parent may be in the business of normally, regularly, usually or customarily eavesdropping on private conversations between the other, adversarial parent and a minor child.[11]

Moreover, the Court of Appeals even actually assumed – correctly – that Respondents violated the Illinois Eavesdropping Act, 720 ILCS 5/14-1 *et seq.* (App. 15-16), and, therefore, Respondents and James committed a criminal act and a tort. *Petitioners submit that a person cannot be acting in the ordinary course of business if the act is criminal or a tort unless the person is regularly a criminal or a tortfeasor.* Clearly, Congress could not have had such "ordinary course of business" in mind.

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[11] The Court of Appeals failed to follow the rule frequently emphasized by this Court, that courts must presume that the "legislature says in a statute what it means and means in a statute what it says there", *Connecticut Nat'l Bank v. Germain*, ___ U.S. ___, 112 S.Ct. 1146, 1149 (1992); and that when "the terms of a statute [are] unambiguous, judicial inquiry is complete except in rare and exceptional circumstances." *Demarest v. Manspeaker*, ___ U.S. ___, 111 S.Ct. 599, 604 (1991). Contrariwise, the Court of Appeals has re-written the statute to give effect to what it considered was the "*probable* intent" of Congress, divined not affirmatively by what Congress said, but rather by the court's speculation as to what it said it "cannot attribute to Congress." (App. 12).

The speculative and legislative character of the decision below is also evidenced by the court's disposition of the state law claim, that respondents were absolutely immune from their assumed violation of the Illinois Eavesdropping Act. The court did not mention the brief of the Chicago Council of Lawyers, *amicus curiae*, which noted that: "There is no [statutory] provision [or common law basis] for immunity, absolute or qualified, in eavesdropping law."

Albeit in another context, Dean Prosser put it well:

> The standard of conduct required of a reasonable person may be prescribed by legislative enactment. When a statute provides that under certain circumstances particular acts shall or shall not be done, it may be interpreted as fixing a standard for all members of the community . . . W. Prosser and W. Keeton, *The Law of Torts* 220 (5th ed., 1984).

It cannot be "ordinary" to deviate from it.[12]

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[12] When the wiretap legislation was first considered in Congress, it included an unmodified prior authority exemption and an unmodified extension telephone exemption. *See,* Hearings before the Subcomm. on Crim. Laws and Proc. of the Senate Judiciary Committee re S. 2050, 90th Cong., 1st Session, 1001-002 (1967), dealing with 18 U.S.C. §2510 (8) and (9) (prior authority and extension telephone, respectively), reprinted in *Controlling Crime Through More Effective Law Enforcement,* U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967. Largely as a result of Professor Herman Schwartz' testimony for the A.C.L.U. in the House, the extension telephone exemption was sharply qualified in the Senate Judiciary Committee by "ordinary course of business" words of limitation. *See,* Hearings on the *Anti-Crime Program,* before Subcommittee No. 5 of the House Judiciary Committee, 90th Cong. 1st Sess. 989 (1967) (testimony of Professor Schwartz); Sen. Rep. No. 1097, 90th Cong. 1st Sess. 11-12 (1967) (§2510 (5) (extension telephone); §2511(2)(c) (prior authority).) As the result of the effort of Senator Hart, the prior authority provision was changed on the Senate Floor to "prior consent" and sharply qualified by words of limitation except "for the purpose of committing any criminal or tortious act in violation . . . of the laws . . . of any State or . . . any other injurious action." 114 Cong. Rec. 14694-95 (1968). Senator Hart explained his amendment: "[W]henever a private person acts in such situations with an unlawful motive, he will violate the criminal provisions of Title III and will also be subject to a civil

The decision below also conflicts with numerous courts of appeals' holdings that even when telephone calls are made in a *commercial* business setting, they may not be intercepted if, as here, they are *personal* and *private* calls.

> We hold as a matter of law that a telephone extension used without authorization or consent to surreptitiously record a *private* telephone conversation is not used in the ordinary course of business. This conclusion comports with the basic purpose of the statute, the protection of privacy . . .

United States v. Harpel, 493 F.2d 346, 351 (10th Cir. 1974) (emphasis added). Holding to the same effect are *Watkins v. L.M. Berry Co.*, 704 F.2d 577, 583 (11th Cir. 1983), *Epps v. St. Mary's Hospital of Athens, Inc.*, 802 F.2d 412 (11th Cir. 1986) and *Campiti v. Walonis*, 611 F.2d 387 (1st Cir. 1979). As stated in *Watkins, supra*, 704 F.2d at 583 (emphasis added):

> We hold that a *personal* call may not be intercepted in the ordinary course of business under the exemption in section 2510(5)(a)(i), except to the extent necessary to guard against

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suit. . . . For example, the secret consensual recording may be made for the purpose of blackmailing the other party, threatening him, or publicly embarrassing him." *Id.* The "other injury act" language was removed in 1986. Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986, 100 Stat. 1850 (1986). Under the Court of Appeals' decision, the "ordinary course of business" exemption for non-party consent interception will be broader than the one-party consent exemption, hardly a result consistent with the text of the statute or its legislative course of development.

> unauthorized use of the telephone or to determine whether a call is personal or not. In other words, a personal call may be intercepted in the ordinary course of business to determine its nature but never its contents.

James' affidavit states that he recorded Ben's calls with Lynn "to find out what Lynn was saying to Benjamin". From the "recordings" he allegedly "realized that [he] had been tricked into signing the Settlement Agreement". The calls were thus not only personal, but their recordation was directed and used against the ex-spouse in domestic relations litigation. The Court of Appeals' decision is plainly inconsistent with its recognition that "[s]pying on your spouse to gain dirt for a divorce case is never within the ordinary course of a spouse's business". (App. 9)

Further, the Court of Appeals has given subscribers of home phone extensions *greater* license under §2510(5)(a)(i) than business users. The latter must hang up when they learn the call is private or personal; the former is free to listen (except for the meaningless limitation of an assertion of a proper purpose).

Twice before this Court has denied certiorari in cases raising the domestic relations exception issue, one allowing spousal wiretapping, *Simpson, supra,* in 1974, one forbidding it, *Heggy, supra,* in 1992. These past denials have not resulted in uniformity by the lower federal courts under Title III.[13] The lower courts, moreover, are

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[13] See Comment, *Wiretapping & the Modern Marriage: Does Title III Provide a Remedy for Victims of Interspousal Electronic Surveillance,* 91 Dick.L.Rev. 855 (1990); Comment, *Interspousal*

facing "an avalanche of cases arising out of marital disputes." C. Fishman, *Wiretapping and Eavesdropping*, 201 (Cumulative Supp. 1991). The need for guidance by this Court is manifest.

Indeed, the court below has *expanded* the conflict by *extending* two decisions, *Newcomb v. Ingle*, 944 F.2d 1534 (10th Cir. 1991) and *Anonymous v. Anonymous*, 558 F.2d 677 (2nd Cir. 1977), both of which involved wiretapping by the *custodial* parent. *Newcomb* was expressly limited by two later Tenth Circuit decisions to actions *by a minor child* against his *custodial* parent, and would not preclude an action by a spouse or ex-spouse. See, *Heggy v. Heggy*, 944 F.2d 1537 (1991) and *Thompson v. Dulaney*, 970 F.2d 744 (1992). Suggesting that the Tenth Circuit "may have misread" its own opinions (App. 11, fn.3), the Seventh Circuit ignored the expressed limitations on *Newcomb*. Here, Petitioners include the *custodial* mother and her present husband and the Respondents are not the father but his attorneys and the GAL.

Anonymous, inconsistent with most of the courts of appeals that have considered "interspousal immunity", is also factually limited to wiretapping by the *custodial* parent in his home where the minor child resided. Although

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Wiretapping, etc., 28 J.Fam.Law 771 (1990), cited *infra*, p. 24; ANNOTS., 55 ALR Fed. 936 (1981), 58 ALR Fed. 594 (1982), 25 ALR Fed. 759 (1975), and 49 ALR (4th) 430 (1986); and *Heggy, supra*, 944 F.2d at 1539, fn.3.

Anonymous[14] and *Newcomb* are unsound and distinguishable, no justification whatsoever exists for expanding the exemption to a non-custodial parent.

The Court of Appeals also overlooked the constitutional implications of denying privacy rights of minors[15] and that minors have other rights, including rights against a parent who harms them.[16]

The current need for certiorari is also heightened by certain statistical facts of our national life. One of the major areas of wiretapping abuse that Congress intended to bar under Title III was in connection with domestic relations surveillance. Since that time, as everyone knows, the divorce rate has skyrocketed. In 1970 the number of people divorced was 4.3 million; in 1993 the number almost quadrupled to 16.7 million.[17] In 1960, eight years before Title III was enacted, less than "1% of

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[14] In contrast to the Tenth Circuit's restrictions on *Newcomb*, the Second Circuit has re-affirmed *Anonymous* in *Janecka v. Franklin*, 843 F.2d 110 (2nd Cir. 1988).

[15] See *Planned Parenthood v. Danforth*, 428 U.S. 52, 75 (1978); and *Carey v. Population Services International*, 431 U.S. 678 (1977).

[16] In *In re E.G.*, 133 Ill.2d 98, 549 N.E.2d 322 (1989), the Illinois Supreme Court held that a minor has a common law right to refuse medical treatment and noted this Court's holdings that minors have constitutional rights to privacy, freedom of expression, freedom from unreasonable searches and to procedural due process. 549 N.E.2d at 326. Minors may sue other persons, even their parents, for torts or malicious acts. See, M. Guggenheim & A. Sussman, *The Rights of Young People* (ACLU Handbook, Bantam Books, 1985) pp. 170 *et seq.*

[17] Census Bureau, "Marital Status & Living Arrangements," as reported in the *New York Times*, July 20, 1994, pp. A1 and A7.

children under 18 were experiencing the divorce of their parents". By 1990, it was "almost 50%".[18] Accordingly, it is not surprising that in divorce and child custody proceedings:

> Over the past several decades the use of electronic surveillance, including wiretapping, has increased at an alarming rate. . . . Comment, *Interspousal Wiretapping: Defining "Marital Home" For Purposes Of Civil Recovery Under Title III*, 28 J.Fam.Law 771 (1990).

CONCLUSION

Petitioners respectfully submit that it is time for this Court to answer the Title III issues raised by this and prior cases, to grant the Writ and upon review, reverse the Court of Appeals.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: August 10, 1994

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[18] Carnegie Corporation Report and other sources as reported in the *New York Times*, April 12, 1994, pp. A1 and A11.

In the
United States Court of Appeals
For the Seventh Circuit

No. 93-1880

LYNN A. SCHEIB, BENJAMIN GROSSE, a minor, by LYNN ANN SCHEIB, his next friend and CARL SCHEIB,

Plaintiffs-Appellants,

v.

JOAN C. GRANT, BURTON F. GRANT, and DOROTHY B. JOHNSON,

Defendants-Appellees.

Appeal from the United States District Court
for the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division.
No. 92 C 513 – **Marvin E. Aspen,** *Judge.*

ARGUED DECEMBER 1, 1993 – DECIDED APRIL 15, 1994

Before WOOD, JR., EASTERBROOK and RIPPLE, *Circuit Judges.*

RIPPLE, *Circuit Judge.* The plaintiffs, Lynn Scheib, her husband Carl Scheib, and her son Benjamin Grosse, brought this action pursuant to Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 ("Title III"), 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510-2521, and the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute, 720 ILCS 5/14-1 *et seq.* Defendants Joan and Burton Grant had served as the attorneys of Lynn Scheib's former husband and Benjamin Grosse's father, James Grosse,

during custody proceedings in Illinois state court. Defendant Dorothy Johnson had served as Benjamin Grosse's guardian ad litem ("GAL"). The district court granted summary judgment for the defendants. For the reasons that follow, we affirm.

I

BACKGROUND

A. *Facts*

Lynn Scheib and James Grosse were divorced in 1982. Lynn had been granted sole custody of their son, Benjamin Grosse. Mr. Grosse had visitation privileges. In January 1991, Lynn informed James that she intended to marry Carl Scheib and move to Pennsylvania, and that she planned to take eleven year-old Benjamin with her. As a result, James contacted his attorneys, Joan and Burton Grant, who filed an emergency motion for injunctive relief in Illinois state court to prohibit Benjamin's removal without a proper proceeding. Following litigation and negotiation, the parties, including the court-appointed GAL, Dorothy Johnson, reached a written settlement. The parties agreed that Benjamin could move with Lynn to Pennsylvania, but that James would have extended summer and holiday visitation rights. Although all parties signed the settlement on June 19, 1991, it was subject to court approval. While awaiting that approval, Lynn moved to Pennsylvania, and Benjamin stayed with James in Illinois, where Benjamin was to stay as part of James' visitation rights until August 5, 1991.

While staying in Illinois with his father, Benjamin made telephone calls to, and received telephone calls

from, his mother Lynn. According to James, on more than one occasion, Benjamin became upset and emotional after speaking with his mother. As a result, James decided to find out what was being said between Lynn and Benjamin in these calls. Unbeknownst to either Benjamin or Lynn, James used a telephone answering machine attached to an extension to record at least two conversations between Benjamin and Lynn. Because, as James tells it, the tapes of those conversations revealed that Lynn was causing emotional harm to Benjamin, he took them to his attorneys, Joan and Burton Grant. According to Joan Grant, she agreed with James that the tapes showed that harm was being done to Benjamin, and therefore informed the GAL of the tapes' contents.

After learning of the existence and content of the tapes from James' attorneys, Lynn's attorneys filed a motion in limine on July 24, 1991 to prevent James or the GAL from introducing the tapes at the hearing on the removal settlement. On August 2, 1991, the state court granted Lynn's motion in limine, apparently because the tapes were made in violation of the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute. The court's ruling was never issued as a written order because, after the court's oral ruling, the parties and the court agreed that the court would enter the removal settlement as an agreed order. Such an order was issued on August 5, 1991. Before the state court entered the settlement order, however, it asked Lynn whether she planned to bring a lawsuit against James in connection with the tapes. She stated that she would not bring such a lawsuit against James and, indeed, she did not do so. Instead, she filed this action against James' attorneys, Joan and Burton Grant, and against Benjamin's

GAL, Dorothy Johnson. The complaint alleged violations of Title III, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510-2521, and the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute, 720 ILCS 5/14-1 *et seq.*

B. *District Court Proceedings*

In resolving Joan and Burton Grant's motion for summary judgment, the district court first addressed Title III, the federal wiretapping statute. The court stated that, if the facts at issue had presented a scenario of so-called "interspousal" wiretapping, i.e., if the facts showed James to have recorded the conversations to obtain information about Lynn, the plaintiffs' federal wiretapping cause of action would have had merit under the caselaw of a majority of the courts of appeals. *See, e.g., Heggy v. Heggy,* 944 F.2d 1537, 1538-41 (10th Cir. 1991) ("We hold that Title III does apply to interspousal wiretapping within the marital home."), *cert. denied,* 112 S. Ct. 1514 (1992). However, the district court stated that the "undisputed facts" in this case demonstrated that the tapes James made of telephone conversations between Benjamin and Lynn presented the court "with a parent who recorded the conversations of a minor child while the child resided in the parent's home." *Scheib v. Grant,* 814 F. Supp. 736, 739 (N.D. Ill. 1993). The only question before the district court, then, was whether Title III should apply to such a situation.

Relying upon Second and Tenth Circuit cases, the district court stated that the statute's exemption for phone extensions used by a "subscriber or user in the ordinary course of its business" applies to the home as well as the marketplace. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 2510(5)(a)(i);

Newcomb v. Ingle, 944 F.2d 1534 (10th Cir. 1991) (holding that "a custodial parent tapping a minor child's conversations within the family home" is "permitted by a broad reading of the exemption contained in § 2510(5)(a)(i)"), *cert. denied*, 112 S.Ct. 903 (1992); *Anonymous v. Anonymous*, 558 F.2d 677, 679 (2d Cir. 1977) (same). Thus, the district court held that James' recording of Benjamin's conversations was exempted from Title III. As a result, no unlawful use or disclosure violation could be established against Joan and Burton Grant or Dorothy Johnson.

The district court then turned to the plaintiffs' claim that the defendants had violated the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute, 720 ILCS 5/14-1 *et seq.*[1] Assuming *arguendo* that the defendants had violated the statute, the district court held that, because the defendants' disclosure of the tapes' contents was "intimately associated" with the state court proceedings, the defendants were entitled to absolute immunity under Illinois law. *Scheib*, 814 F. Supp. at 740. The need for advocates to press vigorously their clients' cases in court without fear of a lawsuit, the district court stated, was too great not to grant absolute immunity for judicially-related disclosures. The district court therefore granted Joan and Burton Grant's motion for summary judgment, and sua sponte granted summary judgment in favor of the GAL, Dorothy Johnson.

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[1] The district court possessed federal jurisdiction over the Illinois state law claim even after disposing of the federal Title III claim because diversity jurisdiction existed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a)(1). *See Scheib*, 814 F. Supp. at 740 n.2.

II

DISCUSSION

On Appeal, the plaintiffs submit two issues for review. First, the plaintiffs assert that Title III admits of no exceptions applicable to this case. Therefore, they contend, James' activity violated the statute, regardless of whether that activity was motivated by a concern for Benjamin's welfare or by a desire to obtain unfavorable information about his former wife Lynn. The plaintiffs argue in the alternative that, even if there is an exception in the statute for attending to a child's welfare, an issue of triable fact exists in this case concerning the impetus behind James' taping. Second, the plaintiffs contend that the district court erred in concluding that the defendants were entitled to absolute immunity in this case and thus could not be held liable under the Illinois statute. We now review the district court's decision de novo to determine whether any genuine issue of material fact exists and whether the defendants were entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(c). In so doing, we must take all facts in the light most favorable to the plaintiffs. *See Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 255 (1986).

A. *Title III*

Section 2511 of Title III states in part that, except as provided elsewhere in the chapter, any person who:

> (c) intentionally discloses, or endeavors to disclose, to any other person the contents of any wire, oral, or electronic communication, knowing or having reason to know that the information was obtained through the interception of a

> wire, oral, or electronic communication in violation of this subsection; or
>
> (d) intentionally uses, or endeavors to use, the contents of any wire, oral, or electronic communication, knowing or having reason to know that the information was obtained through the interception of a wire, oral, or electronic communication in violation of this subsection; shall be punished as provided in subsection (4) or shall be subject to suit as provide in subsection (5).

18 U.S.C. § 2511(c) & (d). Title III provides a private cause of action in 18 U.S.C. § 2520, which provides in part:

> Except as provided in section 2511(2)(a)(ii), any person whose wire, oral, or electronic communication is intercepted, disclosed, or intentionally used in violation of this chapter may in a civil action recover from the person or entity which engaged in that violation such relief as may be appropriate.

In short, using or disclosing information one had reason to know was obtained originally in violation of Title III is actionable under the statute. Title III, however, contains an extension phone exemption, which is set out in 18 U.S.C. § 2510:

> (5) "electronic, mechanical, or other device" means any device or apparatus which can be used to intercept a wire, oral or electronic communication other than – (a) any telephone or telegraph instrument, equipment or facility, or any component thereof, (i) furnished to the subscriber or user by a provider of wire or electronic communication service in the ordinary course of its business and being used by the

> subscriber or user in the ordinary course of its business. . . .

The issue in this case is not whether the defendants' activities fall under 18 U.S.C. § 2511(c) & (d), but rather whether James' conduct in taping the conversations between Benjamin and Lynn was exempted from Title III by virtue of the extension phone exemption of 18 U.S.C. § 2510(5)(a)(i).

The plaintiffs submit that § 2510(5)(a)(i)'s extension phone exemption is not applicable to James' conduct. They assert that it makes no difference whether the taping is characterized as directed at Lynn or as motivated by Benjamin's welfare. The exception contained in § 2510(5)(a)(i) is simply inapplicable. First, if the taping is considered as directed at Lynn, the plaintiffs state that a majority of the circuits that have addressed the issue have held that there exists no "interspousal" exemption from the strictures of Title III.[2] The plaintiffs reason that no

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[2] *See Heggy v. Heggy*, 944 F.2d 1537, 1539 (10th Cir. 1991) (holding that "Title III does apply to interspousal wiretapping within the marital home"), *cert. denied*, 112 S. Ct. 1514 (1992); *Kempf v. Kempf*, 868 F.2d 970, 973 (8th Cir. 1989) (holding that "the conduct of a spouse in wiretapping the telephone communications of the other spouse within the marital home, falls within [Title III's] purview"); *Pritchard v. Pritchard*, 732 F.2d 372, 374 (4th Cir. 1984) (stating that there is "no indication in the statutory language or in the legislative history that Congress intended to imply an exception to facts involving interspousal wiretapping"); *United States v. Jones*, 542 F.2d 661, 673 (6th Cir. 1976) (holding that "the plain language of [§ 2511] and the Act's legislative history compels interpretation of the statute to include interspousal wiretaps"). *But see Simpson v. Simpson*, 490 F.2d 803, 805 (5th Cir.) ("The naked language of Title III, by

exemption can therefore be found in a case like this one which involves ex-spouses. The defendants concede that the statute does not contain any sort of "interspousal immunity." Therefore, the question of any kind of "interspousal" exemption is not at issue. *See* Appellees' (Grants) Br. at 11 (conceding that "[s]pying on your spouse to gain dirt for a divorce case is never within the ordinary course of a spouse's business").

Second, with respect to taping directed at Benjamin out of concern for his welfare, the plaintiffs state that the same reasoning supporting the absence of an "interspousal" exemption ought to control cases in which a party tapes the telephone conversations of any other person within the home, even a child not of majority age. In support of this contention, the plaintiffs submit that the language in the § 2510(5)(a)(i) exemption (which states Title III does not extend to instruments "a subscriber or user" employs "in the ordinary course of its business") does not apply outside the confines of strictly commercial activity. "Business," the plaintiffs submit, "means business." Further, the plaintiffs maintain that the cases which have construed the exemption in § 2510(5)(a)(i) to apply to situations in which a parent has recorded phone conversations of his or her child are distinguishable. In this regard, they point out that in both *Newcomb v. Ingle*,

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virtue of its inclusiveness, reaches this case. However, we are of the opinion that Congress did not intend such a far-reaching result, one extending into areas normally left to states, those of the marital home and domestic conflicts."), *cert. denied*, 419 U.S. 897 (1974).

944 F.2d 1534 (10th Cir. 1991), and *Anonymous v. Anonymous*, 558 F.2d 677 (2d Cir. 1977), the parent recording the minor's conversations had custody of the child, unlike James, with whom Benjamin was only visiting. In any event, the plaintiffs assert, both cases were wrongly decided.

We cannot accept the plaintiffs' argument. At the outset, we note that, although the defendant-parent in both *Newcomb* and *Anonymous* had custody of the child whose conversations the parent recorded, we do not read either case as making the precise nature of the parent's custodial status a factor, much less outcome-determinative, in the decision. Rather, both cases focus on the extension phone exemption of § 2510(5)(a)(i) and the need for parents with whom a minor child is living to obtain information concerning that child's welfare. In *Anonymous*, the defendant-father had tape-recorded telephone conversations between his daughter, who was living with him at the time, and his estranged wife. The Second Circuit affirmed the dismissal of the wife's Title III action because the father's activities fell within § 2510(5)(a)(i)'s exemption: "Such a use of an extension phone in appellee's own home would certainly be in the 'ordinary course of [the user's] business.' " *Id.* at 678-79; *see also Janecka v. Franklin*, 843 F.2d 110, 111 (2d Cir. 1988) (per curiam) (affirming validity of *Anonymous* where defendant-father claimed he recorded mother-daughter phone conversations out of concern for daughter's welfare).

Similarly, in *Newcomb*, the Tenth Circuit affirmed summary judgment entered against a plaintiff-son who had brought a Title III action against his mother. She had

recorded conversations between him and his father when he was living with his mother as a minor; the recordings had revealed that the son's father, the mother's ex-husband, had instructed the son to set fire to his mother's home. *Newcomb*, 944 F.2d at 1535. The court stated that the "interception of a family member's telephone conversations by use of an extension phone in the family house is arguably permitted by a broad reading of the exemption contained in 18 U.S.C. § 2510(5)(a)(i)." *Id.* at 1536. The court continued:

> There is no persuasive reason why Congress would exempt a business extension and not one in the home. The difference between listening on the extension and tapping the line within the home in the context here is not material. "[W]e think the (5)(a)(i) exemption is indicative of Congress's intention to abjure from deciding a very intimate question of familial relations, that of the extent of privacy family members may expect within the home vis-a-vis each other."

Id. (citation omitted).[3]

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[3] We note that cases subsequent to *Newcomb* appear to create an ambiguity with respect to the contours of the rule in the Tenth Circuit. The source of that ambiguity is *Thompson v. Dulaney*, 970 F.2d 744 (10th Cir. 1992). In *Thompson*, the court appeared to limit the principle announced in *Newcomb* on the basis of the plaintiff's identity: "We distinguish *Newcomb* as did *Heggy* by noting that in *Newcomb* it was a minor child living at home at the time of the wiretap who was complaining, whereas here, as in *Heggy*, it is the spouse who is complaining." *Id.* at 747 n.4. It appears that the *Thompson* panel may have misread the earlier decision in *Heggy v. Heggy*, 944 F.2d 1537 (10th Cir. 1991). *Heggy* concerned interspousal wiretapping and, in the course of its discussion, the court reiterated the *Newcomb* holding and

In our view, the plaintiffs have presented no persuasive reason why we ought to depart from the reasoning of the other circuits. The language of § 2510(5)(a)(i) juxtaposes the terms "subscriber" and "user" with the phrase "in the ordinary course of its business." Although the latter phrase might be used to distinguish commercial life from personal life, in the context presented here, it must be read in conjunction with the terms "subscriber" and "user." These terms certainly do not have exclusively market-oriented connotations. Reading this extension phone exemption as a whole, then, it is no lexical stretch to read this language as applying to a "subscriber's" conduct – or "business" – in raising his or her children. Congress might have spelled out in more precise detail the contours of the extension phone exemption; but its failure to do so does not relieve us of the obligation to give the statute a reading consistent with the probable intent of the legislature. We cannot attribute to Congress the intent to subject parents to criminal and civil penalties for recording their minor child's phone conversations

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then distinguished it by stating that "the type of situation addressed in this opinion is 'qualitatively different from a custodial parent tapping a minor child's conversations within the family home.' " *Id.* at 1538 n.1 (quoting *Newcomb*, 944 F.2d at 1535-36). As far as we are able to ascertain, the Tenth Circuit has not overruled *Newcomb*. Because we believe that *Newcomb* is correctly decided and is in agreement with the decisions of the Second Circuit in *Anonymous* and *Janecka*, 843 F.2d at 111 (affirming dismissal of Title III claim brought by ex-spouse of defendant where defendant claimed concern for child motivated taping), we shall not presume that *Newcomb* is no longer the law of the Tenth Circuit.

out of concern for the child's well-being. As Judge Anderson stated in *Newcomb*, there is simply no reason why Congress would grant such an exemption to commercial but not domestic subscribers. *Id.*[4]

In the alternative, the plaintiffs submit that, even if § 2510(5)(a)(i) covers a situation in which a parent tapes a child's phone conversations out of concern for the child's welfare, there exists in this case a genuine issue of material fact as to whether concern for Benjamin's welfare was in fact James' purpose in taping the phone conversations between Benjamin and Lynn. The plaintiffs submit that a jury ought to decide whether James recorded the telephone conversation because of a concern for Benjamin, or because of a desire to obtain negative information about his ex-wife Lynn. *Cf. Thompson v. Dulaney*, 838 F. Supp. 1535, 1545 (D. Utah 1993) (stating that "there is a fact question as to what [defendant-mother's] 'purpose' was in intercepting the conversations").

The burden of establishing a matter of intent is always difficult. We therefore approach the matter of summary judgment carefully in such cases. *See Bronze Shield, Inc. v. New Jersey Dep't of Civil Serv.*, 667 F.2d 1074, 1087 (3d Cir. 1981) (stating that because intent is "difficult to establish, summary judgment should be granted with

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[4] We note that the Supreme Court has refused to read a requirement of economic or profit-seeking activity into a statute absent clear language to that effect. *See National Organization of Women v. Scheindler*, 114 S. Ct. 798, 806 (1994) (holding that the unambiguous language of the RICO statute does not require a racketeering enterprise or racketeering predicate acts to be accompanied by an economic motive).

caution"), *cert. denied*, 458 U.S. 1122 (1982). Nonetheless, we have made clear that "[s]ummary judgment will not be defeated simply because issues of motive or intent are involved, and is proper when the plaintiff fails to indicate any motive or intent to support plaintiff's position." *Morgan v. Harris Trust & Sav. Bank*, 867 F.2d 1023, 1026 (7th Cir. 1989). Here, the defendants have submitted evidence tending to show that James' concern for Benjamin was based on information that the child's conversations with his mother were the source of his becoming upset.[5] Under these circumstances, the plaintiffs had to do more to avoid summary judgment than to point out that Lynn was on the other line every time James recorded Benjamin's calls. Accordingly, we hold that James Grosse did not violate Title III in recording Benjamin's conversations

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[5] The defendants submitted the affidavit of James Grosse. In it, he states that Benjamin became "extremely upset" and "experienced . . . traumatic episodes following conversations with Lynn. Each time, Benjamin would react negatively and become anti-social. . . . Never before had he cried so or refused to talk with me or the family. I became even more concerned when I realized Benjamin reacted this way only after he spoke with Lynn." R.40, Exh.1, ¶¶ 11-14. Benjamin himself states in an affidavit that he was "angry" and "upset" and cried after speaking with his mother on different occasions. R.56, Exh.2, ¶ 8. It is true that Benjamin also states that, although he was emotional after speaking with his mother, it was not those conversations that were upsetting him. However, insofar as James Grosse's motivations are concerned, the appearance that Benjamin was troubled after speaking with his mother is what is important. There is no evidence in the record that Benjamin explained the underlying causes of his behavior to his father at the time of the events at issue.

with Lynn. As a result, no unlawful use or disclosure violation can be established against the defendants.[6]

B. *Illinois Eavesdropping Statute*

The plaintiffs also alleged that the defendants violated the Illinois Eavesdropping Act, 720 ILCS 5/14-1 *et seq.* The statute states that a "person commits eavesdropping when he . . . [u]ses or divulges . . . any information which he knows or reasonably should know was obtained through the use of an eavesdropping device." 720 ILCS 5/14-2(b). The district court assumed *arguendo* that the defendants had violated the statute. Nonetheless, it held that, because the defendants' activities were "intimately associated" with ongoing judicial proceedings, the defendants were entitled to absolute immunity.

The plaintiffs submit that the district court erred in granting attorneys Joan and Burton Grant and GAL Dorothy Johnson absolute immunity, regardless of whether their conduct was intimately associated with the state court removal proceedings. At most, they state, the defendants were entitled to qualified immunity. The defendants, on the other hand, contend that the long-standing common law protection afforded to attorneys' statements and conduct closely associated with judicial proceedings required the district court to grant the defendants nothing less than absolute immunity. We conclude

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[6] In light of our holding, we need not address the defendants' arguments concerning whether James had authority to consent vicariously for Benjamin, and whether Title III applies to recordings of conversations which take place on cordless telephones.

that the district court did not err in holding the defendants absolutely immune from damages liability under the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute for using or divulging the tape recorded conversations in a manner intimately associated with the state court removal proceeding.

With respect to James' attorneys, Joan and Burton Grant, we begin with "the oft-stated principle in Illinois that anything said or written in a legal proceeding . . . is protected by an absolute privilege against defamation actions, subject only to the qualification that the words be relevant or pertinent to the matters in controversy." *Defend v. Lascelles*, 500 N.E.2d 712, 714 (Ill. App. 1986); *see also Libco Corp. v. Adams*, 426 N.E.2d 1130, 1131 (Ill. App. 1981) ("The absolute privilege protects anything said or written in a legal proceeding."). The public policy concern underlying the rule prohibiting defamation actions against attorneys arising out of statements or conduct with "some relation" to a judicial proceeding is straightforward: "[I]t is uniformly recognized that the judicial system would be best served if persons with knowledge of relevant facts could report those facts to the court without fear of civil liability." *Defend*, 500 N.E.2d at 714. The attorney in such a situation " 'is acting in furtherance of some interest of social importance, which is entitled to protection even at the expense of uncompensated harm to the plaintiff's reputation.' " *Thomas v. Petrulis*, 465 N.E.2d 1059, 1061 (Ill. App. 1984) (citation omitted); *see also Defend*, 500 N.E.2d at 716 (stating that the "significant interest" involved is the "facilitati[on] of the truth-seeking process"). This absolute privilege is afforded even when malice is assumed to have motivated the attorney. *Id.* at 716-17.

We believe that, if the matter were presented to them today, the Justices of the Supreme Court of Illinois would conclude that the same policy concerns that animate the common law rule prohibiting defamation actions for statements made in relation to a judicial proceeding ought to apply to actions brought under the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute against attorneys who use or disclose information in a manner intimately associated with an ongoing judicial proceeding. We believe that the Illinois Court would conclude that the truth-seeking process of a judicial proceeding will be most securely advanced if attorneys do not fear civil or criminal liability as the consequence of misjudging the legality of disclosing particular information.

We cannot accept the plaintiffs' contention that giving attorneys such absolute immunity "would immunize an attorney's destruction of evidence or elimination or concealing of a material witness so long as the motivation was to help the client." Appellants' Br. at 46. So long as absolute immunity is extended only to the attorneys' statements or conduct closely related to ongoing judicial proceedings, courts will be able to police attorney behavior that civil actions will not be able to reach. As the district court stated, courts have sufficient tools, such as the suppression of evidence and disciplinary sanctions, to guard against abusive conduct that takes place in the confines of a judicial proceeding. *Cf. Auriemma v. Montgomery*, 860 F.2d 273, 278-79 (7th Cir. 1988) (declining to extend absolute immunity to attorneys' extrajudicial investigation because such an investigation is not subject to judicial safeguard and protections), *cert. denied*, 492 U.S. 906 (1989). In this regard, we note that "there is no

'professional responsibility tort' in Illinois." *Zanders v. Jones*, 680 F. Supp. 1236, 1239 (N.D. Ill. 1988) (refusing to recognize cause of action against attorney for violation of Illinois Code of Professional Responsibility), *aff'd without op.*, 872 F.2d 424 (7th Cir. 1989). "The Illinois courts have refused . . . attempts to extend tort liability for conduct in the course of a legal proceeding." *Id.* Because the record indicates that neither Joan nor Burton Grant made any extrajudicial disclosure of the recorded conversations, but rather disclosed portions of the recordings only to persons intimately involved in the ongoing state court litigation, they were entitled to absolute immunity.[7]

With respect to Benjamin's GAL, Dorothy Johnson, we conclude that she too was entitled to absolute immunity. Although no Illinois case has addressed the issue of immunity with respect to a GAL's conduct in a judicial proceeding, state courts which have addressed the general issue of GAL immunity have granted GALs absolute immunity.[8] Those courts reasoned that, absent absolute

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[7] The district court stated in its opinion that "the Grants and Dorothy Johnson disclosed alleged portions of the tape recordings to each other, to other persons and to Judge Moshe Jacobius." *Scheib*, 814 F. Supp. at 738. We do not know to whom the district court was referring in stating that the defendants disclosed the content of the tapes to "other persons." The record is devoid of any evidence indicating that the defendants made disclosures to anyone but the court, opposing counsel, and each other, and the plaintiffs conceded as much at oral argument. We emphasize that there is absolutely no allegation in the case that the attorneys directed or even advised James Grosse to tape the conversations.

[8] *See, e.g., Bird v. Weinstock*, 864 S.W.2d 376, 383 (Mo. App. 1993) (granting court-appointed GAL absolute immunity for

immunity, the specter of litigation would hang over a GAL's head, thereby inhibiting a GAL in performing duties essential to the welfare of the child whom the GAL represents. We believe that the Illinois Supreme Court would find this reasoning persuasive and grant a court-appointed GAL absolute immunity from lawsuits arising out of statements or conduct intimately associated with the GAL's judicial duties. In this case, the record reflects that Dorothy Johnson, who was appointed by the court to serve as Benjamin's GAL, merely listened to portions of the tape after being informed by James' attorneys, the Grants, that the tapes concerned Benjamin's well-being, and later opposed the motion in limine to exclude the tapes from the removal proceedings. Conduct so closely related to a GAL's judicial duties cannot form the basis of a lawsuit if GALs are to continue to apprise courts of all relevant information concerning the GAL's ward.

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actions undertaken in the judicial process); *Collins v. Tabet*, 806 P.2d 40, 44 (N.M. 1991) (holding that "a [GAL], appointed in connection with court approval of a settlement involving a minor, is absolutely immune from liability for his or her actions taken pursuant to appointment"); *Penn v. McMonagle*, 573 N.E.2d 1234, 1237 (Ohio App. 1990) (holding that GAL "is entitled to absolute immunity from actions arising out of the performance of her duties as [GAL]"; *Tindell v. Rogosheske*, 428 N.W.2d 386, 387 (Minn. 1988) (same); *see also Kurzawa v. Mueller*, 732 F.2d 1456, 1458 (6th Cir. 1984) ("a failure to grant [absolute] immunity would hamper the duties of a [GAL] . . . in judicial proceedings.").

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the judgment of the district court is affirmed.

AFFIRMED.

A true Copy:
Teste:

Clerk of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit

Lynn Ann SCHEIB, Benjamin Grosse, a minor, by Lynn Ann Scheib, his next friend, and Carl Scheib Plaintiffs,

v.

Joan C. GRANT, Burton F. Grant, and Dorothy B. Johnson, Defendants.

No. 92 C 0513.

United States District Court, N.D. Illinois, E.D.

Feb. 10, 1993.

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

ASPEN, District Judge:

Plaintiffs Lynn Ann Scheib, Benjamin Grosse (a minor) and Carl Scheib bring this two-count complaint against Joan C. Grant, Burton F. Grant and Dorothy B. Johnson, alleging violations of Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510-2521, and of the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute, Ill.Rev.Stat. ch. 38, ¶ ¶ 14-1 *et seq.* Presently before the court is Joan and Burton Grant's motion for summary judgment. For the reasons set forth below, we grant the Grants' motion for summary judgment. Additionally, we *sua sponte* grant summary judgment on behalf of defendant Dorothy B. Johnson.[1]

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[1] The Grants also have filed motions to strike the affidavits of Benjamin Grosse and Peter T. Wolff, filed in opposition to the motion for summary judgment. In that the substance of these affidavits do not create issues of material fact sufficient to

I. Summary Judgment Standard

Under the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, summary judgment is appropriate if "there is no genuine issue as to any material fact and . . . the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law." Fed.R.Civ.P. 56(c). This standard places the initial burden on the moving party to identify "those portions of 'the pleadings, depositions, answers to interrogatories, and admissions on file, together with the affidavits, if any' which it believes demonstrate the absence of a genuine issue of material fact." *Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317, 323, 106 S.Ct. 2548, 2553, 91 L.Ed.2d 265 (1986) (quoting Rule 56(c)). Once the moving party has done this, the non-moving party "must set forth specific facts showing that there is a genuine issue for trial." Fed.R.Civ.P. 56(c). In deciding a motion for summary judgment, the court must read all facts in the light most favorable to the non-moving party. *Anderson v. Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 254, 106 S.Ct. 2505, 2513, 91 L.Ed.2d 202 (1986); *Griffin v. Thomas*, 929 F.2d 1210, 1212 (7th Cir. 1991).

II. Background

This action stems from a removal and custody proceeding before Judge Moshe Jacobius of the Circuit Court of Cook County. After her divorce from James Grosse in 1982, plaintiff Lynn Scheib was granted sole custody of their son, Benjamin Grosse. In January of 1991, Lynn Scheib informed her former husband, James Grosse, that

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withstand the instant motion for summary judgment, we summarily deny the motions to strike.

she intended to remarry and, consequently, planned to move their son Benjamin from Illinois to Pennsylvania. Recognizing the need for modify the existing visitation schedule, and hoping to avoid filing a formal removal petition, Lynn proposed to James terms for a new visitation schedule. However, neither James Grosse nor his attorneys, defendants Joan and Burton Grant, responded to Lynn's proffered resolution. Rather, on February 11, 1991, James Grosse filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County an emergency motion for injunctive relief, seeking to prohibit removal of Benjamin pending a proper removal proceeding. Subsequent to James Grosse's request for injunctive relief, Lynn filed a petition for removal. James countered with a motion to strike the petition and a cross petition for custody. Defendant Dorothy Johnson was appointed as Benjamin's guardian ad litem ("GAL") in connection with the custody and removal proceeding.

After lengthy negotiation, the parties reached a global settlement, such agreement reduced to writing and signed by all parties on June 19, 1991. However, rather than immediately entering judgment based on the settlement agreement, Judge Jacobius scheduled a prove-up hearing. In the interim and pursuant to the settlement agreement, Lynn Scheib left Illinois for Pennsylvania. Benjamin remained in Illinois with James Grosse, with whom Benjamin was scheduled to reside until approximately August 5, 1991.

During his residence with his father, Benjamin received calls from, and placed calls to, his mother, Lynn Scheib. In at least 60 to 75% of these conversations, Benjamin used a cordless phone in James Grosse's house. At

the time, James Grosse had three telephones in his home. According to James, Benjamin became very upset after several conversations with his mother. Thus, using a telephone answering machine attached to an extension phone, James Grosse recorded at least two conversations between Benjamin and Lynn. James Grosse did not overhear these conversations at the time they occurred, but subsequently heard their content by listening to the recordings after the fact. Claiming that the tapes prove that Lynn Scheib was the cause of Benjamin's emotional distress, James Grosse took the tapes to Joan Grant for legal advice. After listening to the tapes, Joan Grant purportedly formed the opinion that Benjamin's welfare was in jeopardy. As such, she promptly informed Benjamin's GAL, Dorothy Johnson, of the tapes' content.

On July 24, 1991, Lynn Scheib filed a motion in limine in the Circuit Court of Cook County to prevent James Grosse, his attorneys and the GAL from introducing the tape recordings at the prove-up hearing. The Grants, as attorneys for James Grosse and the GAL opposed the motion and vigorously sought to have the tapes allowed into evidence. Prior to, and in connection with, the motion in limine, the Grants and Dorothy Johnson disclosed alleged portions of the tape recordings to each other, to other persons and to Judge Moshe Jacobius. On August 2, 1991, Judge Jacobius granted the motion in limine, seemingly on the basis that the recordings violated the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute. However, the ruling was never incorporated into a formal written order, as the parties had reached settlement regarding the underlying case. On August 5, 1991, Judge Jacobius entered an agreed order, retroactive to June 19, 1991,

resolving all underlying issues in the custody and removal action. Before entering this order, Judge Jacobius conducted a prove-up hearing, at which Lynn Scheib was asked and answered:

> Q. One more just to make it crystal clear. You have no intention of today or in the future doing anything or having anyone on your behalf do anything to criminally or civilly prosecute Mr. Grosse for any alleged matters in connection with any tape recordings that may have been made as a result of these proceedings?
>
> A. No. I'm not going to prosecute Jim.
>
> Q. And you don't intend to have anyone else prosecute him. Is that your intention?
>
> A. Nobody is going to prosecute Jim.

True to her word, Lynn Scheib did not "prosecute" James Grosse in connection with the tape-recorded conversations. Rather, she, Benjamin Grosse and Carl Scheib filed this civil action against James Grosse's attorneys, Joan and Burton Grant, and Dorothy Johnson, alleging violations of Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 ("Title III"), 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510-2521, and of the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute, Ill.Rev.Stat. ch. 38, ¶ ¶ 14-1 *et seq.*

III. Discussion

A. Title III

Title III prohibits any person from "intentionally disclosing[ing], or endeavor[ing] to disclose, to any other person the contents of any wire, oral, or electronic communication, knowing or having reason to know that the

information was obtained through the interception of a wire, oral, or electronic communication in violation of this subsection." 18 U.S.C. § 2511(1)(c) (Supp.1992). A civil cause of action is provided under 18 U.S.C. § 2520, which states in part: "Except as provided in section 2511(2)(a)(ii), any person whose wire, oral, or electronic communication is intercepted, disclosed, or intentionally used in violation of this chapter may in a civil action recover from the person or entity which engaged in that violation such relief as may be appropriate."

Portraying the recorded conversations as "interspousal wiretaps," plaintiffs contend that Title III provides them with a federal remedy against the Grants and Johnson. Indeed, the majority of courts addressing the issue have held that, in the absence of an explicit exception for electronic surveillance by one spouse directed against another, Title III reaches interspousal wiretapping. *See Heggy v. Heggy*, 944 F.2d 1537, 1538-41 (10th Cir.1991), *cert. denied*, ___ U.S. ___, 112 S.Ct. 1514, 117 L.Ed.2d 651 (1992); *Kempf v. Kempf*, 868 F.2d 970, 973 (8th Cir.1989); *Pritchard v. Pritchard*, 732 F.2d 372, 374 (4th Cir.1984); *United States v. Jones*, 542 F.2d 661, 673 (6th Cir.1976); *Heyman v. Heyman*, 548 F.Supp. 1041, 1044-47 (N.D.Ill.1982). *But see Simpson v. Simpson*, 490 F.2d 803, 810 (5th Cir.), *cert. denied*, 419 U.S. 897, 95 S.Ct. 176, 42 L.Ed.2d 141 (1974). However, the undisputed facts set forth in the instant case portray a situation distinguishable from the typical case of interspousal wiretapping. Rather than electronic surveillance directed by one spouse at another, we are confronted with a parent who recorded the conversations of a minor child while that child resided in the parent's home. Benjamin, of course,

was not talking to himself on the telephone. Nonetheless, the mere fact that the taped conversations were between Benjamin and his mother, James Grosse's former spouse, does not alter the complexion of James Grosse's actions.

We have been able to locate, and the parties have cited, only two cases in which the present situation was confronted. *See Newcomb v. Ingle,* 944 F.2d 1534 (10th Cir.1991), *cert. denied,* ___ U.S. ___, 112 S.Ct. 903, 116 L.Ed.2d 804 (1992); *Anonymous v. Anonymous,* 558 F.2d 677, 679 (2d Cir.1977). The courts in both *Newcomb* and *Anonymous* addressed the following issue: Does Title III of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510-2520, apply to situations where a parent intercepts a minor child's telephone conversation via an extension phone within the family home. *Newcomb,* 944 F.2d at 1535; *Anonymous,* 558 F.2d at 677. Drawing upon the extension phone exemption set forth in 18 U.S.C. § 2510(5)(a)(i), both courts answered the question negatively. Section 2510(5)(a)(i) provides in relevant part:

> (5) "electronic, mechanical, or other device" means any device or apparatus which can be used to intercept a wire, oral or electronic communication other than –
>
> (a) any telephone or telegraph instrument, equipment or facility, or any component thereof, (i) furnished to the subscriber or user by a provider of wire or electronic communication service in the ordinary course of its business and being used by the subscriber or user in the ordinary course of its business. . . .

Both the Second and Tenth Circuits held that, unlike the typical circumstance of interspousal wiretapping, the

interception of a minor child's telephone conversations by use of an extension phone in the family home is permitted by a broad reading of the exemption in § 2510(5)(a)(i). *Newcomb*, 944 F.2d at 1536; *Anonymous*, 558 F.2d at 679. "There is no persuasive reason why Congress would exempt a business extension and not one in the home." *Newcomb*, 944 F.2d at 1536. In support of their respective holdings, both courts noted that the legislative history of Title III revealed that Congress considered the very problem of a parent eavesdropping on a minor child within the family home. Indeed, as pointed out by the Second Circuit, the language "ordinary course of [the user's] business" was added to the House bill only after Professor Herman Schwartz testified that he feared that the original version of the bill would permit policemen and private intruders to enter others' homes and listen in on extension phones without penalty. *Anonymous*, 558 F.2d at 679. Professor Schwartz, however, did not recommend deleting the extension phone exemption altogether. To be sure, Professor Schwartz stated: "Now, we can see in certain circumstances where [the exemption] makes some sense. I take it nobody wants to make it a crime for a father to listen in on his teenage daughter or some such related problem." Hearings on the Anti-Crime Program Before Subcomm. No. 5 of the House Judiciary Comm., 90th Cong., 1st Sess. 989 (1967). Both the Second and Tenth Circuits found this statement by Professor Schwartz reflective of "the general understanding of those involved in the legislative process regarding the scope of the statute" in situations involving parental eavesdropping on a minor child via an extension telephone. *Newcomb*, 944 F.2d at 1536 n. 5; *Anonymous*, 558 F.2d at 679.

In the instant case, from his own home – where Benjamin was residing at the time – James Grosse recorded his minor son's phone conversations from an extension phone. Finding the rationale set forth in both *Newcomb* and *Anonymous* persuasive, we hold that Title III does not reach James Grosse's conduct, however wise such conduct may be. The fact that Grosse taped the conversations, as opposed to merely listening in, is "a distinction without a difference." *Anonymous*, 558 F.2d at 679. In the absence of a violation of Title III by James Grosse, no violation for unlawful disclosure by the Grants or Johnson can be established. *See Newcomb*, 944 F.2d at 1536. Accordingly, we grant the Grant's motion for summary judgment on Count I of plaintiffs' complaint. Further, we *sua sponte* grant summary judgment on Count I on behalf of Dorothy Johnson.

B. The Illinois Eavesdropping Statute

Count II of plaintiffs' complaint sets forth a claim under the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute, Ill.Rev.Stat. ch. 38, ¶ ¶ 14-1 *et seq.* Paragraph 14-2 provides in relevant part:

> A person commits eavesdropping when he . . . [u]ses or divulges, except as authorized by this Article or by Article 108A or 108B of the "Code of Criminal Procedure of 1963," approved August 14, 1963, as amended, any information which he knows or reasonably should know was obtained through the use of an eavesdropping device.

Ill.Rev.Stat. ch. 38, ¶ 14-2(b) (Supp.1992). A civil remedy to injured parties is provided in paragraph 14-6, which

explicitly grants t[he court the discretion to award punitive damages.[2] *Id.* ¶ 14-6(1).

Assuming for [the sake of the present motion that the Grants and Johnso[n have committed the offense of eavesdropping as defi[ned in the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute, each defenda[nt nonetheless is entitled to summary judgment. Contra[ry to plaintiffs' assertion, the cause of action set forth in [Count II, being provided by state law, may be subverted [by overriding state policy. For example, it is well es[tablished that attorneys are absolutely immune from liab[ility for defamatory statements that are reasonably relate[d to the subject of ongoing litigation. *See Auriemma v. Mont[gomery*, 860 F.2d 273, 277 (7th Cir.1988), *cert. denied*, 492 U[.S. 906, 109 S.Ct. 3215, 106 L.Ed.2d 565 (1989); *McGrew v. [Heinold Commodities, Inc.*, 147 Ill.App.3d 104, 114, 110 Ill.[Dec. 446, 476, 497 N.E.2d 424, 454 (1st Dist.1986). Drivin[g this rule is the overriding public policy that "the need[s of litigants and their advocates in the

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[2] We note that [t the court possesses jurisdiction over this claim on the basi[s of the parties' diversity of citizenship. Despite the fact tha[t plaintiffs have not plead actual damages in excess of $50,000, [we must consider their claim for punitive damages in determ[ining the jurisdictional amount, such damages being available [e for under Illinois law. *See Sharp Elec., Corp v. Copy Plus, Inc.*, [939 F.2d 513, 515 (7th Cir.1991). While we believe that any aw[ard in excess of $50,000 would be excessive and likely set aside [e for that reason, such a conclusion cannot " 'be judicially mad[e before [the] verdict [is] rendered.' " *Bell v. Preferred Life Society*[, 320 U.S. 238, 243, 64 S.Ct. 5, 7, 88 L.Ed. 15 (1943) (quoting *Bar[ry v. Edmunds*, 116 U.S. 550, 565, 6 S.Ct. 501, 509, 29 L.Ed. 729 [(1886)); *Sharp Elec. Corp.*, 939 F.2d at 515. Accordingly, we m[ust exercise jurisdiction over Count II of plaintiff's complain[t.

judicial process require that advocates be able to vigorously present their clients' cases without having to fear being sued." *Auriemma,* 860 F.2d at 277. The same rationale which would immunize defendants from liability for defamation must also absolve them from liability under the Illinois Eavesdropping Statute.

In the instant case, defendants' conduct of disclosing portions of the taperecorded conversations was intimately associated with the ongoing custody and removal proceeding in the Circuit Court of Cook County. The unique roles that attorneys perform as advocates and GALs in such judicial proceedings mandate that they be able to participate zealously without intimidation or harassment. Most significant to our conclusion that defendants are entitled to absolute immunity for the alleged disclosures, although subject to abuses, there are sufficient safeguards within the judicial process to protect litigants from the type of overzealousness presently alleged. *Cf. Auriemma,* 860 F.2d at 279 (attorneys not entitled to absolute immunity for extra-judicial investigation because such investigation is not subject to the rules of discovery and, falling outside the judicial process, cannot be halted by the trial court). Included in the trial court's arsenal to combat such abusive conduct is suppression of the disclosed evidence and, in extreme cases, disciplinary sanctions. Consequently, the Grants' motion for summary judgment on Count II is granted, and we *sua sponte* grant summary judgment on behalf of Johnson.

IV. Conclusion

For the reasons set forth above, we grant the Grants' motion for summary judgment, and *sua sponte* grant summary judgment on behalf of defendant Dorothy Johnson. It is so ordered.